

Placing Your Personal Records in an Archives

Will Our Historical Record be Adequate for Future Needs? Amazed at the changes in everyday life since your parents' and grandparents' day? What will your descendants think of the era you live in? They may think of it as an unknown and mysterious time, because so little information will have survived until their day. Many photographs, diaries, letters, and ephemeral materials that were produced in your great-grandparents time have survived until today because they were valued and preserved. Many of the records created today will not exist 20 years from now because they are routinely disposed of through short-sighted house cleaning efforts or because they exist in formats (such as videotape, newspaper, magnetic tape, non-archival photo albums) that self-destruct if they are not carefully preserved.

Your family's history is important to your community! You, no matter what your occupation, education, or social standing, have shared in the heritage of a certain place and time. Your personal records document this and can be a part of your community's collective memory. Most individuals and groups lack the resources or expertise to properly preserve their own records. Fortunately, there are places that are in the business of preserving history: the archives of your local, county, and state libraries, museums, universities, and historical societies. These professional institutions are the caretakers of our documented past.

What an Archives can do for you! An archives is a place where historically significant documents are housed and attended. If your records are deemed appropriate for an archives' collections, you stand to gain many benefits. An archives can provide the records with environmentally controlled storage, freeing up your own storage space. It can safeguard the records by overseeing their handling and use. More importantly, it can provide research access to the valuable information the records contain, both to members of your family and to the scholarly public. By placing some of your family's personal records in an archives, you can take an important step toward their preservation -- and you assure that the memories they contain will be kept alive for future generations.

If you are interested in learning to preserve your family's records for the future, or placing your personal records in an archives, please contact:



**Our mission: to educate
through the identification,
preservation, and interpretation
of Idaho's cultural heritage.**

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Placing Your Personal Records in an Archives - cont.

What documents should be kept for the future? Materials produced by an individual can be significant to family members and the community at large. Future researchers or family members are interested in the documents of enduring historical value, those that best illustrate the activities of your own life, friends, family, and the community you are part of. Records can document special occasions such as births, weddings, anniversaries, reunions, and deaths, or everyday events that you have chosen to preserve. Some of these documents may include:

Announcements/ Audio recordings/ Awards/ Baby or birthday memorabilia/ Budget books/ Certificates/ Church or Community memorabilia/ Clippings/ Correspondence/ Diaries or log books/ Drawings/ Histories - individual or family/ Financial statements/ Legal documents - deeds, licenses/ Motion picture film/ Newspaper clippings/ Records of organizations you or a family member belonged to/ Portraits/ Photographs/ Report cards or School records/ Scrapbooks/ Slides/ Sports/ Special occasions/ Videotapes

What should be done to preserve records? The following will help prolong the life of your records:

- * Unfold and carefully flatten papers and gently remove clips, staples, and rubber bands
- * Store records under good environmental conditions (usually a cool, dry, dark area)
- * Add information (names, dates) needed to identify records by writing lightly in pencil
- * Place documents in acid-free containers; photos in acid-free archival albums or archival polyester sleeves
- * Periodically (every 5-7 years) recopy video and audio magnetic tapes

If you decide to donate some of your personal records to an institution, the professional staff of a repository can help you determine what to choose. To protect your privacy or the privacy of your family members, restrictions on access may be negotiated if necessary. Remember that libraries, historical societies, and museums need your strong support to help them preserve, organize, and make accessible records for future generations. Become a member today!

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